



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, and Listen- January 30, 2024

The Lord be with you.

Do you ever feel like you've hit the wall? You know the wall- that point in a marathon where runners feel like they can't go on? The body's supply of energy is running out. Legs feel like jelly, can't get a breath, and everything in the body it feels like a conspiracy to quit.

Recently, our son, Rhett ran a 100 kilometer race and that's a little over 62 miles and, and Rhett told me that at right about a 20 mile mark that he felt like he had hit the wall. And Rhett is thinking, well, I've got another 42 miles to go. In conversations that I've had with some friends recently I'm, I'm hearing from people who, well, they feel like they've hit the wall in life's marathon. And so for the next few moments, I, I wanna read and reflect on a very rich passage of scripture that's helped me and it's helped a lot of people who at times feel like they've hit the wall.

I'm looking at the New Testament Book of Romans chapter five where the Apostle Paul, he is reflected on having been put right with God by faith in Jesus Christ about having peace with God. And then Paul says in verse three of Romans five, he says, we also rejoice in our suffering. That is a curious phrase, isn't it? We also rejoice in our suffering. I mean, why would Paul say something like that? It's some kind of masochist or what?

Well, Paul says he is rejoicing because he knows that suffering is producing something. Suffering is getting something done in the life of the person who is following Jesus. Paul says, we rejoice in our suffering, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance. The Greek word here for endurance is hupomone. That's h-u-p-o-m-o-n-e and it literally means to remain under. There's no cutting and running here. There's no bailing out. You remain under, you remain under the pressure under the heat. Under the trials, you keep going when the going is tough. When you feel like you've hit the wall.

That is hupomone, that's endurance, that's hanging in there for life's long distance race. And then Paul continues, we rejoice in knowing that endurance produces character. We hear a lot today about character and our need for people of character. We, we admire, we look up to people of character and, and we, we, we pray to be people of character. But how do we go about becoming people of character?



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Well, listen to Paul. He says, knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character. It's a fascinating Greek word here that it's translated character. It is a word that was associated with refining and purifying of gold. The fire burns out the impurities in the gold. So that refiner gets pure gold, that gold came through the fire. It was purified of all its impurities and it was said to have to have character and that's, that's the word here and you might today be enduring fire, the fire of suffering, the fire of trials and, and you're staying with it, you keep going. And so Paul says, we rejoice in our suffering, knowing that our suffering produces endurance and our endurance produces character.

I think that is why in the Little New Testament Book of James chapter one verses two and three that we are counseled with these words whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance and let endurance have its full effect so that you may be mature and complete lacking in nothing that is to be a person of character.

The German writer Gert has said that everybody wants to be somebody, but nobody wants to grow in that. He is saying that growth is painful. It's always painful. We go through growing pains. And I can just imagine that some of you who are listening today that you are going through growing pains, but follow the Apostle Paul's chain of thinking. Here, as he says, we also rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope.

Ok. Now, back in verse two of Romans five, Paul defines what that hope is. It is knowing that we're going to share in the glory of God forever. So it's eyes on the finish line, we are going to share in God's glory forever. So Paul lays it out here, suffering produces endurance, producing character, producing hope. And that is why some of the most hopeful people that you will ever know are people who have suffered profoundly. People who have been through the fire, people who have hit the wall. And Paul says that this hope does not disappoint us because he says, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that God has given to us.

That means that you could not round up enough containers to hold the love of God that He's pouring into you through His Holy Spirit. So we rejoice, we, we, we do rejoice when it feels like we've hit the wall when the going gets tough because we know that God is doing something in our lives. He is making us people of character. He's doing something that is eternal that will last forever. So you could put a big sign over your life today. If you feel like you've hit the wall, you, you could say on that sign that God at work.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time.